

Bureau of Parks and Lands
Seboomook Unit Management Plan
Scoping/Listening Session
Greenville High School
August 31, 2004
6:00 – 9:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Introductory Remarks

Welcome and Introductions - Dave Soucy, Director, Bureau of Parks and Lands

Purpose of Meeting: To identify issues that should be addressed in the Management Plan.

Others in attendance from the Bureau of Parks and Lands:

Peter Smith – Western Lands Regional Manager
Tim Hall – Northern Region Parks Manager
Cindy Bastey – Chief Planner
Kathy Eickenberg – Plan Coordinator for Seboomook Unit Management Plan
Steve Spencer – Outdoor Recreation Specialist
Joe Wiley – Wildlife Biologist
Scott Ramsay – Supervisor, Off-Road Vehicle Program
Dave Rodrigues – Planner, Off-Road Vehicle Program
Tom Charles – Chief of Silviculture, Reserved Lands Forest Management
George Powell – Boating Facilities Director
Stephen Richardson – Forest Engineer
Matt LaRoche – Manager, Penobscot River Corridor

Overview of the Seboomook Unit Properties – Peter Smith, Western Lands Regional Manager

- *The lands to be included in this Plan were purchased as part of the West Branch Project, and were acquired in December of 2003. There is a total of about 51,450 acres in the various parcels. They are shown on this map, and include:*
 - *The Seboomook Parcel (41,000 acres, 58 miles of water frontage- includes an earlier acquisition)*
 - *The Canada Falls Lake/South Branch Penobscot River Parcel (+/- 810 acres, 24 miles of frontage)*
 - *Big Spencer Mountain (+/- 4,242 acres)*
 - *The St. John Ponds Parcel (+/- 3,895 acres and 11 miles of frontage)*
 - *Baker Lake Parcel (+/- 1,625 acres. 13 miles of frontage)*
- *These lands are now part of our “Public Reserved Lands” which are managed for multiple uses, including timber management, recreation, and wildlife management. The exception to this is any parcel that is designated as an “ecological reserve” where there*

is no timber harvesting. In this set of lands, we have two areas that were specified, as part of the acquisition agreement, to be managed as ecological reserves: Big Spencer Mountain, and the St. John Headwaters Ponds.

- *This area falls in the “Western Lands” region of our Public Reserve Lands system. This region, prior to this acquisition, included roughly 160,000 acres. With the 51,000 acres added to this region, there are now more than 200,000 acres in reserved lands in the Western Region. .*
- *As manager of Public Reserve Lands, I am responsible for management of the roads and recreation facilities. There are approximately 30 miles of public use roads in this unit. I am aware that the condition of the roads has degraded and needs attention, and we will be addressing this in the Plan.*
- *This acquisition is the first in my region that includes recreation facilities managed by North Maine Woods. The present campsites managed by North Maine Woods are shown on the photo-base maps.*
 - *There are 10 North Maine Woods campsites on state lands in the Seboomook and Canada Falls parcels,*
 - *Plus 2 campsites on Seboomook Lake that are on Great Lakes Hydro lands.*
 - *There are also 2 campsites on the Baker Lake parcel.*
- *The lands we acquired as part of the Seboomook parcel overlap the Penobscot River Corridor managed by our Parks division.*

Relationship to the Penobscot River Corridor – Tim Hall, Manager, Northern Parks Region

- *The Penobscot River Corridor (PRC) begins 500 feet below Seboomook dam and extends down to the Debsconneag Lakes. It includes both fee and easement lands.*
- *The PRC is managed as a water trail, and the addition of the Seboomook Unit raises the possibility of extending that water trail up into Seboomook Lake and the North Branch, and possibly the South Branch.*

Planning Context and Process - Kathy Eickenberg, Seboomook Unit Plan Coordinator

- *Part of a larger project, the West Branch Project, involving conservation and public access easements (282,000 acres) on surrounding lands (refer to map)*
- *Parcels came with a few strings attached – ecological reserve management for Big Spencer Mountain and the St. John Headwaters Ponds; federal loon habitat protection funds used to purchase the property prohibit any new recreational facilities within 1,000 feet of a loon nesting site.*
- *Part of a licensed hydropower system owned and managed by Great Lakes Hydropower, including Canada Falls and Seboomook Lakes. Boating and fishing use patterns may*

change when GLHA is granted a new hydropower license incorporating new water management procedures on these waters.

- *Recognize that these lands have existing high value recreational uses – snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, camping, whitewater boating and that recreation is an important economic engine in the area.*
- *Planning Process*
 - *Inventories - conducting inventories of the resource attributes on the properties*
 - *Identify Issues – Scoping Meeting– understand the issues that need to be addressed in the plan*
 - *Possible Focus Group meetings to explore some issues in detail*
 - *Advisory Committee – Develop Draft Plan with input from an Advisory Committee. Plan contains*
 - *information on the various resources and issues on these properties,*
 - *and management recommendations*
 - *Public Meeting to discuss the Draft Plan*
 - *Plan revision and adoption - plan adopted by Commissioner as recommended by the Director –expect to complete by fall of 2005.*

Public Comments

A Summary of Management Issues/Questions/Concerns Raised

Protection of Special Resources

- Importance of identifying and protecting rare/uncommon plants and ecological features. Reference to Forest Society of Maine map.
- Concern about the fragility of wetlands in the area and potential harm from ATVs.
- Concern about potential overuse of the area, and impact on the special character of the area.

Recreational Uses

- Will there be areas without roads? Will the state consider discontinuing some roads for a more remote recreational experience?
- Big Spencer Mountain trail – foot-trail versus motorized (snowmobile) trail? Option of making a foot-trail and providing an access pull-off for snowmobiles from the main road.
- Routing of snowmobile trail relative to Seboomook Campground – used to go there, now bypassed.
- Large unit – room for both motorized and non-motorized trails
- Consider trends in loss of snowmobile trails and other recreational opportunities on private lands.
- Accommodate full diversity of recreational users.
- Need for user-training for safety and resource protection.
- Management of resources is a key to attractiveness of the area for users: use dropped when deer herd size dropped and when fishing “take” limits decreased.

How the Management of the Seboomook Unit Will Affect Local Businesses/Other Landowners

- How existing private businesses located in or near the unit (as in-holdings or leases) will be considered in the plan.
- The impact of the management plan on local businesses, landowners and camp owners.
- The role/impact of the management plan on regional tourism.
- How the management plan will address public awareness about the opportunities available on these lands – interest in increasing use of the area through increased public awareness by advertising/publicizing the area.
- Importance of hiking and snowmobile trails to local and regional economy.

Access to Seboomook Unit / NMW Gates and Fees

- Regional historical use of North Maine Woods – importance of access to roads and trails to economy of the area.
- State ownership provides opportunity for change in NMW gate system, similar to the opportunity provided with the Nahmakanta lands.
- Public access rights – how will public be assured of continued access to these lands, and reasonable use fees?
- NMW has had to convince new landowners to keep lands open to the public.
- Condition of the roads – especially the 20-mile road from the end of the county maintained section. Also issue of changing maintenance patterns of current landowners on other roads- access is becoming more difficult.
- Gate system has benefits for providing oversight of use – registration deters vandalism. Worry about increased use in winter, without gates to provide this security - could see increased vandalism.
- Gate fees are too high and discourage use. Use of NMW is very low compared to past historic use. Hardly anyone there; Canada Falls campground empty, other NMW campsites not nearly used to capacity. People make plans based on gate fee costs and avoid this area. Particularly high fees for out-of-state users.
- Condition of the roads isn't improved despite high gate fees. Problem in access to Pittston Farm and Seboomook Campground.
- Desire to understand how fees are set. What costs are being covered with the fees? Why are these fees necessary? Need to revisit fee structure.
- View that landowners get a tax break with the tree-growth tax law and owe the public reasonable access in return.
- View that taxpayers paid for these lands and shouldn't have to pay high fees to use them. Was OK when Great Northern charged \$4.00 per car, not a per person fee.
- Access management with gates affects local businesses – especially Seboomook Campground and Pittston Farm. Need to involve businesses affected. High frustration level.
- How does the state contract for services with NMW for campsite maintenance? Is there a competitive bid process? Shouldn't others be able to bid for this work?
- Need for a solution before next summer – put this issue on a fast track.

Other Issues

- Better notice needed for meetings
- How can the state help leaseholders who are being kicked out by new landowners?